

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

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TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PFOR, RP

SUBJ: BARANGAY REFERENDUM - SHOULD MARCOS STAY?

REF: MANILA 7628

SUMMARY. AFTER MUCH PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE QUESTIONS FOR BARANGUAY REFERENDUM, COMELECT CAME UP WITH A SINGLE QUESTION - "DO YOU WANT PRESIDENT MARCOS TO CONTINUE BEYOND 1973 AND FINISH THE REFORMS HE HAS INITIATED UNDER MARTIAL LAW?" SUBSEQUENT COMMENT AND EXPLANATION BY COMELEC CHAIRMAN PEREZ SUGGESTS POSITIVE VOTE WOULD APPROVE MARCOS POLICIES GENERALLY, INCLUDING MARTIAL LAW, RELATIONS WITH SOCIALIST COUNTRIES AND PRESENCE OF U.S. BASES. WHILE INFERENCE IS THAT INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WILL BE CALLED, THIS POINT NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR. WITH QUESTION PRESENTED IN THIS CONTEXT, IT APPEARS THAT MARCOS IS SEEKING THROUGH BARANGAY REFERENDUM GENERAL RENEWAL OF JANUARY MANDATE ON MOST FAVORABLE TERMS POSSIBLE WITH GREATEST COLOR OF LEGITIMACY AVAILABLE UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES. END SUMMARY.

1. AFTER FAIRLY OSTENTATIOUS PRESS AND OFFICIAL DISCUSSION
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SION AND CONSULTATION ON POSSIBLE QUESTIONS FOR SUBMIS-

SION TO JULY 27 BARANGAY REFERENDUM, COMELEC CHAIRMAN PEREZ ANNOUNCED THAT ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT SUGGESTED QUESTIONS HAD BEEN DISTILLED INTO ONE. THE QUESTION ITSELF WAS FIRMLY PRECEDED, AS AN INTEGRAL PART THEREOF, BY AN ASSERTION OF PRESIDENT MARCOS' LEGITIMACY: "UNDER THE PRESENT CONSTITUTION, THE PRESIDENT IF HE SO DESIRES, CAN CONTINUE IN OFFICE BEYOND 1973". THE SOLE QUESTION THEN FOLLOWS: "DO YOU WANT PRESIDENT MARCOS TO CONTINUE BEYOND 1973 AND FINISH THE REFORMS HE HAS INITIATED UNDER MARTIAL LAW?"

2. THOUGH MOST GOVERNMENT INSPIRED SPECULATION IN MEDIA HAD CENTERED AROUND FORMAT FOR RENEWED MANDATE FOR THE GOVERNMENT, MANY OTHER QUESTIONS HAD BEEN MOOTED AND DAILY EXPRESS COLUMNIST, PRIMITIVO MIJARES, HAD SPECULATED, AT ONE POINT, THAT SUCH FOREIGN POLICY MATTERS AS DIPLOMATIC TIES WITH FOREIGN COUNTRIES, ASEAN NEUTRALIZATION FORMULAS, OR EXPIRING LAUREL LANGLEY AGREEMENT MIGHT BE SUITABLE TOPICS FOR BARANGAY CONSIDERATION. IN HIS ANNOUNCEMENT, PEREZ SAID THAT RESULTS OF THE REFERENDUM SHOULD BE REGARDED AS A GRANT OR DENIAL OF A FRESH MANDATE TO MARCOS. HE ADDED THAT MANY OTHER QUESTIONS WHICH HAD BEEN PROPOSED WERE SUBSUMED UNDER THIS BASIC QUESTION WHICH REALLY IMPLIED A REVIEW OF GOVERNMENT'S STEWARDSHIP SINCE JANUARY REFERENDUM.

3. PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY REPORTED THAT, ACCORDING TO PEREZ, BASIC QUESTION EMBODIED NINE SUBJECTS UNDER WHICH THOUSANDS OF SUGGESTIONS RECEIVED BY COMELEC MAY BE GROUPED. THESE ARE:

A. TENURE OF MARCOS BEYOND DEC. 30, 1973.

B. MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION AND REFORMS INITIATED THEREUNDER.

C. SUPREMACY OF CIVILIAN AUTHORITY OVER MILITARY.

D. CONVENING OF AN INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

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E. THE GREEN REVOLUTION OF MRS. MARCOS.

F. PERFORMANCE OF VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS OF GOVERNMENT.

G. PRESENCE OF AMERICAN BASES IN THE PHILIPPINES.

H. ESTABLISHMENT OF TIES WITH SOCIALIST AND COMMUNIST COUNTRIES.

4. DURING SEARCH FOR REFERENDUM QUESTION, COMELEC RELEASES AND COMMENT IN GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED MEDIA STRESSED ROLE OF BARANGAYS AS SUCCESSORS TO TRADITIONS OF PHILIPPINE PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY IN PRE-COLONIAL DAYS. ALSO, ALTHOUGH PRESS AND OFFICIAL SOURCES APPEARED TO AGREE PRINCIPAL POINT JULY REFERENDUM WAS RENEWED MANDATE FOR PRESIDENT MARCOS, MANNER OF SOLICITING QUESTION TO BE DECIDED WAS DESIGNED STRENGTHEN THEME OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY. DEPT LOCAL GOVT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COLLECTED THOUGHTS FROM MAYORS AND GOVERNORS ON APPROPRIATE ISSUES WHILE COMELEC REPORTEDLY CONSULTED DIRECTLY WITH WIDE VARIETY OF CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS.

5. GOVERNMENT PLANS FOR JULY 24 BARANGAY METINGS REMAIN UNCLEAR. THESE WERE ORIGINALLY ANNOUNCED AS RESERVED FOR CONSIDERATION OF LOCAL ISSUES. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, THIS HAS SUBSEQUENTLY BEEN REAFFIRMED BY PEREZ, WHO CHARACTERIZED MEETING AS OPTIONAL. OTHER REMARKS ATTRIBUTED TO PEREZ SUGGESTED THAT BARANGAYS WOULD NOT BE PRECLUDED FROM DISCUSSING MATTERS OF NATIONAL IMPORT ON JULY 24, BUT NO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED NOR, APPARENTLY, ANY BALLOTS PRINTED FOR THESE MEETINGS.

6. COMMENT: AFTER SUGGESTING LIST OF QUESTIONS WHICH, IF PUT TO BARANGAYS, WOULD HAVE CONSTITUTED REAL SOUNDING OF PHIL ELECTORATE, COMELEC PRODUCED SINGLE QUESTION CALCULATED TO EVOKE MOST FAVORABLE POSSIBLE RESPONSE AND CONSEQUENT ENDORSEMENT OF PRESIDENT MARCOS AND HIS MARTIAL LAW REGIME. BY STRESSING THAT THIS QUESTION EMBODIED ASSESSMENT OF MARCOS POLICIES, PEREZ HAS CLEARLY INDICATED THAT AFFIRMATIVE VOTE WOULD CONSTITUTE FULL MANDATE FOR PAST AND FUTURE MARCOS ACTIONS AS WELL

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AS LEGITIMATION OF HIS TENURE BEYOND 1973. SINCE NEGATIVE VOTE COULD THEORETICALLY MEAN REJECTION, AND EVEN OVERTHROW, OF EXISTING GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM, POSITIVE OUTCOME SEEMS ASSURED. ONLY QUESTION OF EXTENT AND DEGREE OF APPROVAL REMAIN, AND THIS CAN BE APPROPRIATELY MANAGED, IF NECESSARY. ONE POINT WHICH IS SO FAR NOT CLEAR IS QUESTION RELATING TO CONVENING OF INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND IT MAY BE THAT, AFTER RECEIVING POPULAR MANDATE, MARCOS MAY WISH TO CONVOKE IT TO OBTAIN LEGISLATIVE LEGITIMATION IN ADDITION.

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